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Revised



MEMORANDUM

To Mayor and Council Members
From Sondra Creighton, P E , Director
Public Works Department
Date December 11, 2006
Subject Lakewood Drive at RM 2222

As you know, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is proposing to construct a new bridge on RM 2222 at the location where RM 2222 crosses Bull Creek at the low-water crossing which will raise RM 2222 above the 100-year flood plain and allow continuous access on RM 2222 at times of heavy rain. There have been ongoing discussions regarding the option of connecting the existing Lakewood Drive to RM 2222, or closing Lakewood Drive at this intersection.

At a Public Meeting held October 24, 2006, TxDOT suggested an additional alternative to those that were already under consideration. This new Option 4 would not include installation of a ramp to maintain the connection of Lakewood Drive to the new RM 2222. However, it would allow for the current response times to be maintained by Fire and EMS because it would include construction of an access road under RM 2222 connecting Fire Station 31 on the south side of RM 2222 to Lakewood Drive on the north side. Use of the access road would be restricted to emergency vehicles only and controlled by a "gate" system.

On Tuesday November 14, 2006, staff from TxDOT, their engineering consultant, Austin Fire Department, Austin Travis County EMS, WPDR and Public Works departments met to discuss the details of the "access road" option.

TxDOT indicated that the access road would have sufficient clearance, 14 ½ feet, under RM 2222 to allow use by all Fire Department vehicles and that the access road would be located out of the flood plain of a 2 year storm (a 2-year storm has a 50% chance of occurring in any given year). This is the same frequency of flooding which already occurs along parts of Lakewood Drive. According to the AFD and ATCEMS, the response times to the Lakewood neighborhood using the proposed access road would be about the same as they are currently.

TxDOT would construct the portion of the proposed 20'-0" wide access road within the TxDOT right-of-way as part of their RM 2222 project. This option requires excavation of the existing creek bed of Bull Creek by about 1½ feet under the RM 2222 bridge. Such excavation will result in degradation to Bull Creek in the vicinity of the project and reaches downstream. Environmental staff from the Watershed Protection and Development Review Department (WPDR) will provide a general assessment of the significance of the predicted environmental impacts by December 21st. The assessment will be somewhat general in nature as plans for the new alternative do not exist.

The remainder of the access road, outside of the TxDOT right-of-way, that would connect to Fire Station 31 (a length of about 350') would be the City's responsibility. A preliminary estimate of the unfunded cost of the City's part of the access road is \$120 k - \$175 k (depending on whether asphalt or concrete will be used for the road).

The Fire Department is investigating ways to effectively control access that would be reliably and sufficiently durable to be located within the creek. The gate system, by necessity, would be located within the creek area and subject to regular inundation from Bull Creek.

Recommendation

While Option 4 does not negatively impact emergency response times, it does not provide any improvements as estimated in the original Option 1 and adds an unfunded cost to the City of Austin of between \$120k - \$175k. Additionally, Option 4 closes access to the general public, which results in shifting traffic to other routes in the neighborhood, including reducing access to Bull Creek Park. We continue to support and recommend the original TxDOT design (Option 1) connecting Lakewood Drive to RM 2222. Option 1 would provide access for emergency services, maintain connectivity and the number of routes citizens have available for travel, would not shift traffic to other adjacent neighborhood streets in this area, and would preserve public access to Bull Creek Park.



Sondra Creighton, P.E., Director
Public Works Department

CC Toby Futrell, City Manager
Rudy Garza, Assistant City Manager